

ST. BOTOLPH CLUB

MEMORIAL

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

BY

JOHN LESLIE BRECK

FROM

MONDAY, MAY 1, TO THURSDAY,

MAY 18, 1899, INCLUSIVE

EXCLUSIVE OF SUNDAY

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JOHN LESLIE BRECK

April 10, 1860—March 18, 1899

It is peculiarly true in the case of a man of art or of letters that the truest and most abiding record of his life is his work.

The painted canvass or the printed page is his message to the world, in which he embodied all his ambition and effort, all the wisdom and poetry of his nature.

In a singular degree did the life and the work of John Leslie Breck move forward on the same lines, and these paintings might well be left to tell their own tale more eloquently than any pen. It is, however, a satisfaction to know something of the accidents and circumstances which, while not of the substance of a life, have much to do with controlling it.

John Leslie Breck was born April 10, 1860, at sea, within sight of the Ladrone Islands, on the clipper ship "Moonlight," of which his father, Captain Joseph B. Breck, honorably remembered in the naval service of the United States and in the East Indian merchant service, was master.

Of New England antecedents, the home of his childhood was in Newton, Massachusetts, and here was developed his love of nature and his early skill in line and color. At eighteen this skill was so manifest that he was sent abroad for study. After a short stay at Leipsic he went to Munich, where for

three years he was a student at the Royal Academy, under Strabhofer. He then worked for a year or more in the studio of the historical painter, Charles Verlat, at Antwerp. Returning to America he spent two years in and about Boston, painting at Newton, on the river Charles, and in Worcester County, where at Rutland some of his happiest days were passed.

In 1886 he again sought Europe, working during the first two years at the Julian Academy, under the friendly criticism of Boulanger and Lefèvre. The summer months he naturally spent afield, and became so enamoured of Giverny and its associations that he moved from Paris and lived there from 1887 to 1890. Here the results of his earlier study took definite and characteristic form. Inspired by the work and companionship of the great painter, Claude Monet, he painted from nature with the same sympathetic insight and loyalty to his own impressions.

Monet's well-known view, that a man must be a student of nature and not of another man, is so strong that he gives no one the right to call himself his pupil. Nevertheless he distinguished Breck by appreciation and encouragement and afforded him unusual opportunities to paint with him in the fields.

After a year in America, spent in part in California, Breck passed the winter of 1891-92 in England, where in Kent he painted some of his most charming canvasses, full of the freshness and vigor of his now formed style, exhibiting with credit at the New Gallery in London in the exhibition of 1892.

Since the winter of 1892 his home has been in Boston, except for a few months when he had a studio in New York. This period was however broken by another journey to Europe in 1896, where he painted for a few weeks in Venice, bringing home pictures which show his command of brilliant and harmonious color.

Mr. Breck exhibited in the Salons of 1888 and 1889 and also at the Paris Exposition of 1889, where he received an Honorable Mention. In this country his work was frequently seen at the Society of American Artists, at the Academy of Design, and at other exhibitions. On two earlier occasions this gallery has been filled with Mr. Breck's work. His first exhibition, after his return from Giverny in 1890, was a revelation of skill which won the heartiest commendation of discriminating judges, and his exhibition in 1895 sustained the promise he had given.

It is not easy to speak of Mr. Breck as a man apart from an artist. To those who knew him as a friend these paintings speak of him with an eloquence beyond that of their art. They are full of youth and joy, of floods of dancing light and color, of pure air and delight of life. He knew the play of light on the ripple of a forest brook and on the waving reeds, and his eye and his brush held all the myriad colors that a bed of flowers or a twilight sky can show. These and his friends were the only real things to him, and made up the beauty alike of his life and his work.

His character, loyal and joyous, found expression in his painting. His art was his religion. No faith could be more absolute than his belief in what he read in nature as truth in art, and he would no more quickly let a false note in line or color stand upon his canvass than he would lend his hand to an ignoble act.

Mr. Breck died suddenly on Saturday, March 18, 1899, at the Saint Botolph Club, in Boston. His passing from the joyous warmth of life to the peace that follows had no lingering sickness, no intervening dusk of evening and no gloom of night. The fragrance of his memory carries on the joyousness of his life, and these paintings full of gladness and beauty prolong the same happy note that he sang to his friends when among them.

CATALOGUE

	OWNER	
1 HAYSTACKS AT GIVERNY, 1892	Mr. Edward T. Rice	T
2 CHOCORUA, 1899	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
3 MISTY DAY AT VENICE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
4 THE CLIFFS, IRONBOUND ISLAND	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
5 ESSEX, 1895	Miss Plummer	
6 CHOCORUA, 1899	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
7 LA RIVA, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
8 SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
9 WINTER AT AUBURNDALE, 1895	Mr. Edward T. Rice	
10 VENICE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
11 WOODS IN WINTER, 1899	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
12 FISH BASKETS, VENICE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
13 SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
14 SAN GIORGIO, VENICE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
15 WINTER, RUTLAND, 1894	Mr. Dwight Blaney	
16 GUIDECCA CANAL, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
17 IN KENT	Mr. A. C. Wheelwright	
18 A BROOK IN KENT, 1892	Mrs. C. N. Allen	
19 AUTUMN IN GIVERNY	Mrs. E. F. Rice	
20 ON THE EPT	Mr. Dwight Blaney	
21 GREY DAY ON CHARLES RIVER, 1894	Mr. Alex. P. Browne	

	OWNER
22 TURKEYS	Mrs. E. F. Rice
23 GUIDECCA CANAL, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice
24 SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW, GIVERNY	Mr. H. G. Curtis
25 GUIDECCA CANAL, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice
26 CLOUDS	Mrs. E. F. Rice
27 MOONRISE, ESSEX	Mrs. E. F. Rice
28 SILENCE	Mrs. E. F. Rice
29 TORCELLO, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice
30 OLD GARDEN AT SALEM	Mr. Otis Kimball
31 GIVERNY	Mrs. E. F. Rice
32 APPLE BLOSSOMS	Mr. Roger Wolcott
33 THE OJAI VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, 1891	Mrs. Benjamin Kimball
34 SPRING, 1896	Mr. Charles N. Allen
35 MOONLIGHT, 1887	Miss Plummer
36 IPSWICH BAY, 1898	Mrs. E. F. Rice
37 SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE, 1897	Mrs. E. F. Rice
38 MILL STREAM	Mr. Edward Breck
39 FOG AND SUN, GIVERNY, 1884	Mr. Geo. W. Chadwick
40 AUTUMN, 1892	Mr. S. W. Richardson
41 MOONLIGHT, GIVERNY, 1891	Mr. Otis Kimball
42 BLUE HILL, MILTON, 1890	Mr. Charles N. Allen
43 THE RIVER	Mr. Otis Kimball